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ABSTRACT

Businesses are helping schools in "adopt-a-school" programs, work-skill improvement programs, and in curriculum areas other than vocational or career education. The practice of "loaning" the services of business executives to schools has benefited dozens of school systems. This article identifies many programs, lists tips for schools beginning a school-business partnership, and advises school boards to have up-to-date written policies that outline the types of school-business programs they will encourage. Other topics discussed in this issue include planning and development of a school volunteer program; how to develop and update a school organizational chart; and criteria a school board should use in accepting offers of organized special interest groups to found specific curricular and extracurricular programs. (MLF)

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Updating SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES
Volume 13/Number 9/October 1982

A component of the Educational Policies Service of the National School Boards Association provided to NSBA Direct Affiliates and EPS subscribers

Looking for resources? Try business

by Lu Van Loozen

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School systems of all types and sizes are getting more serious about striking up partnerships with the businesses in their communities, and there's plenty of evidence that the desire to get together isn't one way.

Industry spends more than $30 billion annually to train employees in job-specific and remedial basic skills, making it in industry's own interest to help the schools produce an adequately trained labor supply. As a major provider of tax dollars, businesses have a vested interest in ensuring effective and efficient operation of the public schools. Corporations get a tax break for their philanthropic efforts and improve their image with the public by demonstrating that they care about the community, and not only about the bottom line.

On the other side of the fence, schools have come to realize, as Chicago Supt. Ruth Love has said, that "the problems of education are too massive for a school system alone to solve." Schools—faced with reductions in government spending and the inability to pass tax and bond issues—need alternative sources of funding. They also need and want to improve their management capabilities, their accountability, and their credibility with the public they serve. Business can help with all these tasks.

Of course, the chief beneficiaries of good school-business partnerships are the students, the community, and in the long run, the nation.

Let me count the ways

The ways in which business and education leaders are accomplishing what, in essence, is mutual back scratching appear unlimited, but the "adopt-a-school" program is one of the most popular. As the name implies, a company "sponsors" a school, and may provide financial, material, or people support to assist the school in attaining its educational goals. Volunteers may serve as tutors, resource people for enrichment activities, assist with field trips, or sponsor special school events and activities with the community and with parent-teacher groups.

In Dallas, more than 400 companies have adopted schools and are providing up to $3 million in cash, services, and material to 200 schools. In Los Angeles, employees of more than 100 firms help in 115 schools. In Memphis, the Federal Express Company raised $1 million, including $40,000 through an auction conducted by families of the firm's pilots, to build an addition to the school for the handicapped.

Traditional school-business alliances have focused on programs that relate directly to students. These include activities that promote career awareness and preparation, or economic and citizenship education. Work-study programs, Junior Achievement, and student internships are some of the common arrangements.

In some communities, such as Montgomery County, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D.C., the work-skill improvement programs joining business and the schools have been so successful that neighboring school systems are adapting programs of their own. The Montgomery County programs, developed in 1975, have the active support and participation from local companies, banks, trade associations, and professional groups. In one program, students build homes, valued at more than $100,000, from basement foundation to roof. In the other program, students repair used cars, which are put up for sale through a student-operated dealership.

Each program is co-administered by the Montgomery County Public Schools and a non-profit foundation created especially for these programs. The board of the construction foundation includes a lawyer, architect, appraiser, banker, accountant, two realtors, a developer, and two builders. On the automotive foundation board are representatives from local automobile dealers, automobile associations, an oil company, and a bank. The school system's vocation trades coordinator serves as vice president of each foundation.

Beyond the traditional

Many school systems are seeking business' help in curriculum areas other than vocational or career education. The adopt-a-school program organized by the Chicago Board of Education, for instance, stresses *only* the basics—reading, writing, and math. For example, students touring the Bankers Life insurance office, are shown the typical path taken by a policyholder's monthly premium payment. The focus is on the skills required to perform the tasks of computing of actuarial tables, the running of computer billing operations, or the writing of booklets that explain coverage to policyholders.

A four-year old program sponsored by the Times-Picayune Publishing Corporation of New Orleans, the Newspaper in Education (NIE) program, is helping students across the country improve their critical reading skills. An estimated one in five U.S. newspapers participates in an NIE program.

In the District of Columbia, the school system is going beyond the

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traditional call to businesses to ask for help in other ways: advice on curriculum, staffing, technical assistance, provision of jobs, and assessment of programs. The system also is asking several major corporations to invest more than $1 million in five "magnet" high schools that will seek to prepare students for careers in communications, computer sciences, engineering, hotel and restaurant management, and finance. The D.C. plan has been called one of the first examples of extensive corporate involvement in creating "career" high schools in the U.S.

Other ways that don't involve students directly but in which businesses are helping schools or school systems include:

- cash donations
- management studies
- legal assistance
- staff development
- help with passing tax levies
- assistance with budget preparation
- help to obtain legislative goals (such as reforming school financing and establishing minimum education achievement standards)
- long-range planning
- desegregation
- parent education
- assistance with communications efforts.

The concept of the private sector "loaning" business executives to the public sector began in the '70s when companies helped governmental agencies in New York City and Cleveland stave off bankruptcy. Now, dozens of school systems are reaping the benefit from such public-private arrangements.

An expert on loan from the local General Electric plant in Tyler, Tex., helped the school system tighten its purchasing procedures. The Baltimore schools saved $700,000 on its school bus operations through changes initiated by business experts. Three companies —Holiday Inn, Federal Express, and Plough, Inc.—loaned the Memphis school system the services of an administrator skilled in marketing to help develop a pilot marketing program to recruit students to attend four "optional" high schools.

Most are school initiated

Although there are advantages to both parties in the school-business partnership, it's usually up to the schools to court business involvement and to demonstrate how the partnership will benefit both partners. To do this, "you also have to be involved in the schools and in the community," says Penny Olcott, vice president of the St. Louis (Mo.) School Board. "By being available, I have found there are a number of small things that businesses can do more readily than some of the monumental things we have a tendency to ask for."

Olcott cautions against continuously seeking assistance "from the people with the big money." There are a lot of small businesses that cannot come up with $100,000 or $200,000 to write off, but are willing to help the schools if they're asked," she says.

In explaining why businesses in his community were responsive to school requests for scholarships and other resources, Chelhalis (Wash.) School Supt. Donald A. Mitchell identified the following reasons:

- Board members, administrators, teachers, and other staff have sought to work closely with the community to bring the best education to the children.
- There has been little turnover in administration and administrators have sought to build strong relationships with individuals, as well as with the business district.
- Close friendships have been built between school personnel and the community through involvement in activities away from the schools, as well as those activities carried on in the schools.
- Students have worked cooperatively with the community to demonstrate their interest; for example, in work-experience programs.
- School leaders have worked actively to help the businesses set up scholarships or foundations.

Tips for starting school-business partnerships are provided in a special report published by the National School Public Relations Association, called "Business-School Partnerships: A Plus for Kids." They include:

- Surveying your schools to see what resources are needed and desired.
- Being willing to free people to work with the business community.
- Involving teachers from the beginning in planning and implementing programs that include students.
- Finding out what other schools and school systems have done or are doing, and adapting their concepts to your local circumstances.
- Having realistic expectations regarding student achievement or "employability" after a partnership gets underway.
- Seeking from business something other than financial support; asking for people and material resources.
- Being willing to let "outsiders" in and your students out.
- Developing collaborative efforts on a school-by-school basis.

Keys to success

Those who are involved in school-business partnerships say that the key to any successful program is full board support and an administrator that has the responsibility and the authority to make things happen. Says Michael Wilson, vocational trades coordinator for Maryland's Montgomery County Schools: "Ideally, the level of authority of the

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school system representative would be on an equivalent par with the business people he is working with."

When setting up the construction and auto repair programs, the Montgomery County School Board considered and made decisions on such things as:

- personnel—How many additional school employees would be needed? Would special training be required?
- facilities and equipment—Would additional facilities and equipment be necessary?
- transportation—Who would drive the students to the work sites and how would the demand on school buses be coordinated with other transportation needs?
- legal liability—Would the school system have the same liability for the students at the work site as it would for students taking a field trip?
- did the programs meet state education requirements?
- how would the programs be funded?

Policy implications

The policy implications and decisions related to the establishment of any school-business partnership are numerous. Many boards may have a general policy stating that "the schools belong to the people and that public involvement in school affairs is welcome." A few boards may have a more specific policy, such as that of Dallas that states: "Each school shall make a systematic effort to identify businesses, industries, other educational institutions, community groups, and organizations which are interested in schools and have resources that would enhance the learning program."

A random survey of schools engaged in school-business partnerships, however, indicates that, beyond a general policy statement, there is little consideration of the policies that effect or are affected by school-business ties. School-business arrangements often are ad hoc pet projects of teachers and school administrators, and the general attitude of both board members and administrators has been, "whatever we can get, take it."

With the increase in school-business alliances, there is an increased need to ensure that whatever is done is supported by and in compliance with board policy. Having up-to-date, written policies is one way a school board can address one of the major concerns regarding school-business partnerships—that of attempts by businesses to influence educational philosophy, or control the material being taught, the way it's taught, and who teaches it.

Considerations should be given to policies in such areas as:

- community involvement in decision making
- school district goals and objectives
- public gifts to the schools
- special interest materials
- public solicitations/advertising in the schools
- school volunteers
- field trips and excursions
- work-experience opportunities
- occupational education
- equal educational opportunities
- student employment.

Policy statements developed in these areas should outline the types of school-business programs the board will encourage. These programs should support the school system goals and objectives, and fall within the framework of approved curriculum and extracurricular guidelines. The board also should be sure that none of the programs offered infringes upon the legal necessity of providing equal educational opportunity to all students. ■

Lu Van Loozen, director of NSBA's School District Management Services, is a former school public information administrator and editor of the recently published book, Becoming a Better Board Member.

How to get more than money can buy

Using the expertise of local business executives, the Carrollston-Farmers Branch school system in suburban Dallas has developed a successful program that helps evaluate the school system's business operations and improve efficiency in such areas as purchasing, maintenance, finance, payroll, transportation, and food services. Board initiative as well as support was instrumental in getting the program underway, says Supt. Dan Long.

How does the program work? The board hires one paid consultant, who, along with top business executives in the community and volunteer experts from the public sector comprise a committee to study a particular area of school operations. Each executive volunteer is matched with an equally competent volunteer from another school system or another public sector institution. Together these private executives and public business leaders take an objective look at the business operations of the Carrollston-Farmers Branch school system. The paid consultant, who is knowledgeable and respected in business and education circles, spearheads the evaluation efforts, and writes, edits, and presents the committee's report to the board and the media.

As Long explains, district staff are not paired with the business consultants, which enables the board to receive an outside, objective analysis of their business operations. The program, however, provides a vehicle for staff input and self-evaluation.

His school system, Long says, enjoys much more than the advice of consultants it couldn't ordinarily afford. Not only are operations improved, but board and administrative accountability is enhanced. Board members, especially those who want to encourage community support, believe the program helps them demonstrate to the public that they are taking their roles seriously, and are spending public money intelligently and wisely, he said.

More information about the Carrollston-Farmers Branch Evaluation of Business Services program can be obtained from the NSBA Policy Information Clearinghouse.

Trends

Use volunteers to fill gaps in school services

The call for volunteers was initiated by the White House, but has been taken up on the local level by school systems across the nation. As districts trim the fat from budgets—in some cases paring them to the bone—citizen volunteers in the classrooms have helped to make up some of the cuts in school services.

At one time, the image of a "typical" school volunteer was a mother whose children attended the local school and who had extra time on her hands. Today, with many women working outside the home for pay, "volunteer" connotes a wide variety of people who contribute many different skills. Volunteers may include older students who help younger ones, parents, corporate or community leaders, and senior citizens. According to a recent survey by the National School Volunteer Program (NSVP), a membership organization that helps train coordinators of volunteer programs, approximately 4.6 million citizens contribute their time and skills to the nation's elementary and secondary school programs.

Although school volunteers may shelve library books and monitor lunch rooms, they also provide many other services. Volunteers may conduct kindergarten screening, as those in the Canton and Maumee City (Ohio) Public Schools have done; or as in Wethersfield, Conn., they may help to evaluate the effectiveness of the district's academic program. They also may aid in curriculum development, as did senior citizens in the Highlands School District in Natrona, Pa., who helped to prepare a school curriculum on the aging.

State support

There are at least a dozen statewide school volunteer programs that offer technical assistance, training, and staff development for local school system volunteer coordinators. In three states—Florida, Texas, and North Carolina—the state department of education takes an active role in helping local school systems develop volunteer programs.

In Florida, more than 77,000 citizens donated time and skills in the past year, providing services worth more than $14 million. In North Carolina, more than 94,000 volunteers have provided nearly 2 million hours of their time to the schools. In both states, grants to local districts have provided seed money for starting up these programs.

In North Carolina, the Division of Community Schools in the Department of Public Instruction works with the Governor's Office of Citizens' Affairs and the North Carolina School Volunteer Program, an affiliate of NSVP, to provide informational material and training for volunteer coordinators.

According to Julia Smith, an education specialist with the Department of Public Instruction, eight volunteer specialists are located in regional offices throughout the state, each serving a set number of school systems. Regional volunteer coordinators, Smith says, provide schools with "more direct services, which makes for a stronger volunteer program."

Planning and development

Good school volunteer programs do not just happen. Dan Merenda, deputy director of NSVP, says that a good volunteer program "requires the same planning and program development any other school program requires." It requires a needs assessment, the setting of goals and objectives, the development of an organizational framework, and the establishment of a continuing evaluation program.

Also warns Merenda: Although volunteer time and labor may not cost a district anything, "we don't want people to think that a volunteer program is free. You can't create a good volunteer program without money."

According to the NSVP survey, the average seed money needed by a school board to develop a comprehensive volunteer program is $11,000. The money allocated may include the salary for a part-time or full-time staff coordinator.

A staff coordinator performs a key role in determining the success of a volunteer program. The coordinator, Merenda says, "can help match the skills of the volunteer with the needs of the school system." The coordinator generally is responsible for developing the program, deciding upon the tasks that need to be fulfilled, recruiting and training volunteers, maintaining their morale, and developing an evaluation program.

Some school systems may consider the initial investment for a volunteer program high, but the return may be 10 times the investment. For example, a school system of 10,000 students may have $20,000 to invest in the development of a program with 1,000 volunteers who devote 40,000 hours annually to the schools. Paying these volunteers an average of $5 per hour would cost $200,000—a sum beyond the reach of some budgets.

Not a teacher

Although volunteers may tutor students, lecture on career opportunities, demonstrate skills, and exhibit handiwork, they cannot replace teachers. Volunteers work with teachers who coordinate their talents and skills with the instructional program and the goals and objectives developed by the school board. Board policy should encourage local citizens to volunteer their time and talents, but it also should recognize that volunteers are not a substitute for paid professional or support staff.

In addition to providing services not available otherwise, volunteers create a tighter bond between school and community. They can speak on behalf of the schools and provide feedback from the community. While the school system is the beneficiary of a volunteer's service, the rewards also are great for the individual who gives his time and effort. ■

Tips 'n Techniques

The image of your organization is in its chart

Developing and keeping your school system's organization chart up to date may not be your most pressing concern, but consider this:

- A well-constructed organization chart promotes smooth and efficient working relationships that enable staff to work without overlap or confusion.
- An organization chart is the most efficient means of informing the public of the lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability within the school system.
- An up-to-date chart can be used to show new personnel where they fit into the school system.
- It also can be used as a reference for members returning after a summer in which various changes in organization may have been made.

Most important, the organization chart provides a framework for achieving the goals of the school system. A system's goals and objectives should be written in policy, but the positions needed for their fulfillment should be diagramed on the organization chart and should specify responsibilities of personnel to fulfill each goal and objective.

Chart structure

In reading any organization chart, certain points should be clear:

- Who reports to whom. The lines of authority for decision making and to whom responsibility is delegated should be evident.
- Who works with whom. Positions that are interrelated by the nature of their functions should be illustrated.
- Who works on what. For purposes of evaluation and promotion, complaints and grievances, assignments and transfers, the organization chart should reflect the assignment area under which each position falls.

Types of charts

Most school systems use some variation of the "line and box" chart, a traditional format showing the hierarchy within the school system in terms of line and staff relationships. Line functions have a direct line of authority or reporting line from the superintendent to the students. This may include an assistant superintendent of instruction who reports to the superintendent and who, in turn, receives reports from the school principals, who delegate authority to the teachers. Staff functions support the instructional program, including the business, personnel, public relations, and legal offices, and provide assistance to line functions to accomplish their objectives.

A nontraditional format for an organization chart is a "cluster" chart. It is used when a school system wants to demonstrate it is less concerned with who gives orders to whom, and more concerned with who works together on what. Cluster charts diminish the sense of hierarchy found in line and staff organization charts. Staff positions instead may "cluster" around the line positions to show how they function with each other. Cluster charts emphasize intercommunication, collegiality among workers, and informal as well as formal relationships. They probably are most effective for showing intra- and interdepartmental relationships. Many school systems use a traditional chart to give an organizational overview, while using a cluster chart to outline inter-organization relationships.

Some systems, to clarify who does what—especially among the central office administration—also may develop a functional organization chart. This chart lists the areas of responsibility of a central office position. It doesn't rank or compare the level of authority and responsibility of jobs. It provides a synopsis of responsibilities for a particular position, and often is helpful in letting the board, staff, and the public "see" who is accountable for what.

While the board's policy manual should include an overall organization chart, the administration may develop organization charts for any unit within the school system. The school principal may develop a line and staff chart for use within the school, while the music coordinator may develop a cluster chart to show how all the school system's music teachers, and band and chorale leaders work with one another.

All organization charts developed by the board and the administration should be easy to read and interpret. If a relationship cannot be easily charted, then its function probably is confusing or obscure and the position should be re-evaluated. This may mean eliminating the position and splitting the responsibilities among several positions, all of which report to one person.

The organization chart may diagram position relationships, but it should be guided by policy in the following areas:

- school system goals and objectives
- administrative organization plan
- line and staff relations
- management team
- school building administration
- personnel policies goals
- personnel policies priority objectives
- board-staff communications.

Updating your chart

A well-designed organizational chart is only as good as it is up to date. So a school administrator, possibly the director of personnel, should be responsible for ensuring that the chart reflects any changes that are made as soon as they are made. Changes in the above-mentioned policies as well as personnel changes caused by reduction-in-force, transfers, and retirement will affect your organization chart. ■

Policy Adviser

As our district budget becomes tighter, organized special interest groups have offered to fund specific curricular and extracurricular programs that have been cut. What criteria should the board use in the approval of these programs and the acceptance of these funds?—*Superintendent, Minnesota*

The board should address first whether the specific curricular or extracurricular program would have been approved for the school year if funding had been available in the board's budget. If a foreign language course was dropped from the secondary school curriculum, it may have been because of a lack of student interest as well as the lack of available school funds.

If the particular program provided supplementary instruction to students, and would have been approved by the board had funds been available in the school budget, then the board may want to consider accepting outside funding to continue the program. The board should check with its attorney to be sure that the acceptance of private funding is in line with state law and regulations. It also should determine that the private funding can be expected for a considerable period of time. If a parents' group offers funding for the school soccer program, it should be prepared to support the program beginning with pre-season training and ending with the final game of the season.

The board also should investigate the extent of this private support. A group offering to fund the soccer program may not consider purchasing uniforms and equipment as part of its support. The cost for uniform and equipment purchases would either be passed on to the students or the board.

Furthermore, as the board considers the reinstatement of a course for which private funding would be made available, it should follow its policy and regulation on curriculum adoption. A description of the student population to be affected by the reinstatement of the course; instructional objectives; performance objectives; and criteria for evaluating program effectiveness are all items to weigh.

Likewise, when the board considers the reinstatement of a cocurricular or extracurricular activity, it should follow the criteria established in policy on cocurricular and extracurricular programs. Questions to ask include:

- Will the activity contribute directly toward the educational, social, or civic development of the student?
- Is there student interest to participate in the activity?
- Will the activity place excessive time demands on teachers and students?
- Will there be excessive cost to the participating students?
- Is a faculty adviser available?

Any activity recommended for reinstatement must not discriminate against any student from participating. ■

For more policy help

Sample policies and exhibits relating to the topics covered in this month's *Updating* are included in the school administrator's copy. These are:

Organization Plan: CC, Administrative Organization Plan; CCA-E, Organizational Chart.

School-Business Partnership: IGAD, Occupational Education; IICB, Community Resource Persons.

Volunteers: IICC, School Volunteers.

Private Funding: KH, Public Gifts to the Schools.

Additional sample policies, regulations, or exhibits on these and other topics may be requested from the EPS Policy Information Clearinghouse, NSBA, 1055 Thomas Jefferson St., N.W., Washington, DC 20007.

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